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Treasurer visits PCC district office

In January, Arizona elected former State Sen. Dean Martin to the position of state treasurer. Less than six months later, in June, the State Treasury announced that Arizona's educational endowment distributions would rise from \$32 million to \$69 million during fiscal year 2007-08, a 114 percent increase from the previous year.

To understand exactly what facets of the Arizona K-12 educational system would be affected by the doubling of the educational endowment, Martin met Sept. 7 with representatives from Pima Community College at the college's district office.

"What it can be spent on is class size reduction, with a minimum of 20 percent going to teacher pay," he said.

Martin said other areas that should see significantly increased financial support over the next fiscal year are AIMS assistance (such as hiring tutors), teacher training and dropout prevention programs.

"It allows the local school districts to customize programs ... it makes sure the dollars are spent on the classroom, and not sucked up by some administrator somewhere for a cushy office," he said.

The treasurer spoke about the funds being able to improve teaching environments by purchasing computers and making classes smaller, but also noted how institutions could use the funds to hire new teachers.

"Education is the one area that has not benefited from technology to the same degree that other industries have," he said. "It still comes down to a teacher in front of a classroom; they haven't developed a robot that can teach yet. So we're going to have to face the fact that education is going to have to become a large percentage of our overall budget, because you're not going to be able to use technology to replace that teacher."

Because the state's community college system wasn't established when Arizona established the educational endowment, the increase won't affect Pima Community College.

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